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Chair: Mr. John Brassard



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• (1610)

[English]

The Chair (Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC)): I call the meeting to order.

Mr. Barrett, I see you, but first I have Ms. Khalid on a point of order.

Go ahead.

Ms. Iqra Khalid (Mississauga—Erin Mills, Lib.): I would like to seek clarification from you on two things.

The Chair: What's number one?

Ms. Iqra Khalid: It's with respect to a status update on Twitter documents at some point in today's meeting.

It's also with respect to how you decide who gets recognized at this committee. I had my hand raised on multiple occasions, and I know I was the first person to raise my hand meeting after meeting after meeting, yet you didn't recognize me.

I'm just wondering if we can count on your non-partisanship as the chair of this committee.

The Chair: Yes, you can.

Ms. Iqra Khalid: I'm not done talking, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: You can, Ms. Khalid. I recognized Mr. Barrett to start, because his hand was up.

Ms. Iqra Khalid: No.

The Chair: It was up as soon as the gavel dropped. You can challenge me if you like. Challenge me.

Ms. Iqra Khalid: That's absolutely fine, but I would like an update on why we have committee business today, when we have so many motions we have to go through and so many issues we need to get through. We're having another committee business meeting today, which doesn't help us understand....

We haven't seen any work plans from you. We haven't seen any witness lists from you. We haven't seen how we are going to conduct ourselves with respect to all of these motions. I don't understand why we have a committee meeting today.

The Chair: I was going to update the committee before your point of order.

Ms. Iqra Khalid: No, Chair. You clearly passed the floor to Mr. Barrett—

The Chair: I saw his hand up.

Ms. Iqra Khalid: —which is your right, absolutely. You see only that side of the floor. That's great. Good for you.

I would like to know exactly what we're doing here. If we're having a committee business meeting, I would like to know from you what the committee's business is. There are all of these motions we've passed and all of these witnesses we've submitted for all of these various studies, yet we have no idea what we're doing, except for calling motion after motion and referring only to Mr. Barrett. Mr. Barrett might as well be—

The Chair: Do you want me to answer the question?

Ms. Iqra Khalid: Mr. Barrett might as well be the chair of this committee.

Go ahead.

Mr. Michael Barrett (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, CPC): Is that a nomination?

The Chair: The committee business was to update the committee on where we are with the witnesses. We had some challenges based on the fact that the motion on the CRA was passed last Tuesday.

As it stands right now, I want to update the committee that on the 19th, we have the Privacy Commissioner scheduled. We have H&R Block. We just couldn't get anybody scheduled for today. H&R Block is also scheduled. For the 21st, we're still waiting to hear from the minister. The request has been made to have the minister appear before the committee, and then we're going to have the commissioner of the CRA. The challenge is that some of the commissioners are out of the country. We've been able to schedule those for the week of the 19th, which is when we get back.

I have Mr. Barrett, followed by Mr. Villemure.

Go ahead, Mr. Barrett, please. You have the floor.

• (1615)

Mr. Michael Barrett: Chair, I'm going to move a motion. I move:

With regard to Minister Randy Boissonnault's involvement in Global Health Imports and the firm's contracts with the Government of Canada, the committee call the following witnesses:

Shawna Parker and Felix Papineau of Global Health Imports

Minister Randy Boissonnault

Malvina Ghaoui.

I've sent that to the clerk in both official languages, Chair, and I'd like to speak to the motion.

The Chair: The motion is in order.

Madam Clerk, have you shared that motion with members of the committee?

It will be coming around in a second.

Mr. Barrett, you said you'd like to speak to the motion. Go ahead, sir.

Mr. Michael Barrett: Chair, it's a bit like Groundhog Day when it comes to this scandal with Randy Boissonnault. It continues to both get headlines and concern Canadians when it comes to our obligations and our mandate under the Conflict of Interest Act and the obligations of that minister to abide by it.

We've had appearances at this committee of the minister and his business partners, and the minister claimed he was not the person in question. It was another Randy. It wasn't him. Now, we have new WhatsApp messages from Stephen Anderson, from 2022. One says, "I just updated Felix and Randy." We have another, which says, "I won't tell Shawna and Felix and Randy yet."

Now, Mr. Anderson, the 50% business partner with Justin Trudeau's minister from Edmonton, Randy Boissonnault, claimed it was an autocorrect.

Mr. Michael Cooper (St. Albert—Edmonton, CPC): It was nine times.

Mr. Michael Barrett: It was nine times. However, we now have more messages, so it would have to be more than nine times. In none of those nine instances, nor in the new documents, does anyone ask who they mean, because they're not familiar with that name. No one questions whether it's a typo or whether it's someone else. No, they say it's Randy. Now, Randy has said that he's not the Randy in question, but we also have confirmation that there was no other Randy who worked at this firm.

We later learned, after the Liberal minister from Edmonton said he couldn't have communicated with his business partner Stephen Anderson on the dates in question, because he was at a Liberal cabinet retreat in a room impenetrable by electronic communications, and his phone was locked in a box and buried under the building, that he did actually exchange text messages and did have a phone call with his business partner, Stephen Anderson. It's another example of where we see that the Liberal minister is not being truthful. We also know that while he was a 50% owner of the company, they won a contract with the Government of Canada while he was sitting around the cabinet table.

Of course, none of these things are acceptable. What is of paramount importance, though, is that we had the issue with Mr. Anderson. This committee did vote by majority to send to the House that he had been in contempt and that he had prevaricated when he was here, and the Speaker ruled on that. Now we have an issue of a similar nature with respect to the minister.

Therefore, today, I'm not looking for the committee to take a decision on whether there's been contempt by the minister, but I do think we need information about this. While these text messages or WhatsApp messages add a new dimension to what this committee is dealing with, it comes down to whether the minister was honest when he testified at this committee.

There's a story in the National Post today that says, "Liberal minister's former business questioned over 'Indigenous' claims in government contract bids". It's highly suspicious at best, but at worst, it's fraud. While that issue is one that perhaps we can discuss another day, it certainly speaks to the apparent dishonesty of the minister.

We can't have people come before parliamentary committees and do anything other than tell us the truth. They can't not answer the question, and they can't lie to us. Therefore, we need answers to that. It is incumbent on this committee.

We've heard, time and time again from members of the Liberal Party that the Ethics Commissioner looked at it and said that it was fine, but then he had to look at it again, because it turns out he wasn't given all the information. Then he had to look at it again, because he wasn't given all the information. I think that he's going to be surprised that he was, again, deprived of all the information. However, that's for the Ethics Commissioner to decide. He can take his decisions about what he would like to do.

This committee is solely responsible for whether we permit people to come before this committee and lie. We need to get answers, and it's important that the witnesses who are proposed in the motion also come to speak to this. We've seen, so far, that the co-owners of the company have demonstrated themselves not to be honest. We are not looking for Mr. Anderson to return. The committee has taken a decision with respect to his conduct before this committee and has referred it to the House, and the House will deal with it. We do need to speak to another parliamentarian, Mr. Anderson's business partner, Mr. Boissonnault, and we need to hear from these two folks who come up every single time the minister's name is mentioned, and they are Shawna and Felix.

• (1620)

No one at this committee should want to be made a fool of by people who are invited to come before us, but that's what's happening. We are being made fools of by these witnesses who have come before the committee.

It can't be allowed to stand that Randy Boissonnault can offer a different set of facts in answering the same question every time he comes before the committee. He needs to come here and tell us the truth. Then we can move on. Until we've finally gotten the truth, then this committee needs to undertake this study and get resolution.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Barrett.

I have Mr. Genuis next, followed by Mrs. Shanahan and then Mr. Cooper.

Go ahead, Mr. Genuis.

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Thank you very much, Chair.

I want to speak in support of this motion from Mr. Barrett to bring Liberal Minister Randy Boissonnault back to the ethics committee.

In particular, I want to speak to the issue of the claims made that his company—a company that he owned as minister, which was also seeking federal government contracts—was indigenous. Now, the government operations committee that I serve on as a regular member has been investigating this government's indigenous procurement scandal. We've been undertaking this investigation really at the request of and in response to concerns that have been raised by indigenous leaders themselves. Indigenous leaders have asked the Auditor General to look into the contracting scandal.

The basis of this scandal is basically that well-connected, non-indigenous elites have been able to take for themselves contracts that are supposed to go to indigenous people and indigenous businesses. It is cultural appropriation leading to financial misappropriation. It's people pretending to be indigenous or entering into shady joint ventures where most of the benefit and most of the action is happening on the non-indigenous side, to try to appropriate benefits through these kinds of arrangements away from indigenous communities and towards well-connected, non-indigenous insiders.

This is a problem that we have become aware of and that we've been investigating for a number of months. In fact, Chief Bernard from the AFN said that in their view, most of those contracts from the indigenous procurement set-aside are going to shell companies.

This is a huge problem. It's a problem that has been brought to Parliament by indigenous leaders themselves, and it's a problem that we have been trying to get to the bottom of. Meanwhile, Liberals have been saying that there's nothing to see here and that it's no big deal. They're trying to check the box and wanting to move on rather than actually get into the substance of the issue and really take seriously what we're hearing from indigenous leaders.

Then today we have this revelation that not only is it just well-connected, elite insiders taking advantage of this program, but it is the most well-connected, elite insider possible, a minister of the Crown. His own company has been trying to get contracts on the basis of a claim that the company is indigenous-owned.

Looking back at the record, Minister Boissonnault has made all kinds of contradictory claims regarding his identity in various places and in various publications. In the House today, in response to a question in question period, the Liberals admitted, in fact, that this business was never on the indigenous business list. The government is saying that this company wasn't on the indigenous business list, yet the minister's company was making the claim that it was indigenous on the basis of inconsistent claims about identity that the minister has made.

This is a very serious issue, because we can see the legacy of various things that have been done to indigenous people and the tragic rates of poverty. Therefore, there's urgency for fully including indigenous people in the economy and for supporting measures that advance economic development, yet we have measures announced by the government being taken advantage of by elite insid-

ers, including a company that, in the course of trying to get these contracts, claimed to be fully indigenous-owned and was able to do business with the government to its advantage.

We very much need to get to the bottom of these claims and the involvement of Minister Boissonnault in this very serious Liberal indigenous procurement scandal, so I'm very supportive of the motion and look forward to his being brought back to testify before this committee.

Thank you.

• (1625)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Genuis.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Villemure, I'm sorry, but I assumed you wanted to talk about something else.

Mr. René Villemure (Trois-Rivières, BQ): That's right, I didn't want to talk about the motion.

[*English*]

The Chair: Okay. Thank you.

Mrs. Shanahan, go ahead, please, on the motion.

Mrs. Brenda Shanahan (Châteauguay—Lacolle, Lib.): Thank you, Chair.

It appears that this is where I came into this committee. It was regarding this Mr. Anderson. It seems so sinister, this Mr. Anderson, who apparently has been playing fast and loose in using the name of Minister Boissonnault in his business dealings on a multiple of occasions.

I seem to remember that when I came in we were seeing the Ethics Commissioner for I think something like the third time, apparently. We were questioning the Ethics Commissioner regarding these texts. The commissioner had reiterated how he had conducted his investigation, and he was very clear about how he goes about his work. He's an independent officer of Parliament. He obviously takes this very seriously. It's the credibility not only of not him, but of that institution, that role, that is coming under question when members of Parliament, particularly members of the official opposition, don't get what they want and repeatedly call for further investigations and, indeed, are questioning the report that the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner put forth to us.

Indeed, Minister Boissonnault provided those text messages. I remember looking at them and saying, like, "Okay, what is this?" It was a banal thing about some kind of telecom thing or something, you know, and to check back—the sort of routine thing when you leave a place of work and somebody's looking for a contact. He said, "No, I'm not involved in this anymore and please contact the person who is handling this business."

It's this kind of mishmash of bits and pieces of text messages and WhatsApp messages and so on, which actually showed that the minister had nothing to do with the business dealings of this Mr. Anderson, but this Mr. Anderson certainly demonstrated, from what I understand—now, I wasn't there for his testimony, but I'm sure that colleagues here will fill us in—that he was very free and easy, apparently, with using the name of the minister. From what I'm told about the character and conduct of that person, it certainly appears that he was doing it for his own purposes, his own profit and his own ends.

It's a kind of lesson to all of us to be careful about who we get involved with when that day comes and we find ourselves in the private sector. Again, in fact, I found it very interesting at that point, when I came into this committee, that the Ethics Commissioner was able to talk about the rules around conflict of interest and the responsibilities of members. Indeed, we heard something of that earlier in the week when we heard from the Lobbying Commissioner, did we not?

At the same time, we have just completed what I think was a very fulsome report around misinformation and disinformation, and I know there are other motions on the table that concern the privacy of Canadians.

• (1630)

I was very glad, Chair, that you were able to arrange for the testimony of the big four—Facebook, X, TikTok and.... Which was the other one? Maybe there were two of them from Facebook. I forget now. I and my constituents were very glad to see that this committee was undertaking work to question *les géants du Web*, as we call them in French, about the safeguarding of confidential data. How is that data used in algorithms, for marketing purposes and so on? I think this, again, goes to how we need to be very mindful that these bits and pieces—text messages and so on—people are trying to put together to create a case.... I don't think it's worthy of the work of this committee.

What Mr. Genuis brought up is interesting, because that was from another committee I was sitting on—public accounts. We were made aware that there are companies specializing in indigenous procurement. They obtain public contracts by using the set-aside for indigenous procurement.

You know, Chair, I'm a paper person. My staff is trying to wean me off paper, but I have this with me. This is from David Yeo, who was very proud to tell us that not only was he a co-owner of Dalian Enterprises and using indigenous.... I'm sure this is being studied in public accounts. He is also a Conservative member. He was very proud to show us that. This was his claim to fame, how he was able to attract customers. It was because he was able to attract contracts for them.

Again, I wouldn't say that it's a grey area. I think it's quite clear that people need to conduct themselves—

• (1635)

The Chair: Go ahead on your point of order, Mr. Genuis—not on a point of debate.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Oh.

Isn't it correct that Mr. Yeo ran for a different political party in the last election?

Ms. Iqra Khalid: What's the actual point of order, Chair?

Mr. Garnett Genuis: I apologize. It wasn't related to the Standing Orders.

The Chair: That's a point of debate.

Mrs. Shanahan, go ahead, please.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Was it as a PPC candidate? That's it. There it is.

Could we clarify whether she's allowed to use props, though?

Mrs. Brenda Shanahan: Oh, oh!

The Chair: That's it, Mr. Genuis. Thank you.

Go ahead, Mrs. Shanahan.

Mrs. Brenda Shanahan: Aren't they just a satellite party—if we're talking about the PPC? Maxime Bernier.... What is he doing these days? Do we even know?

Mr. Garnett Genuis: He's grifting.

Mrs. Brenda Shanahan: That's right.

Again, if I look at this motion, it seems that we're trying to get back with another kick at the can. The Ethics Commissioner, I think, is going to be very right when he finally appears before us to talk about his budget in his office and so on, to say that he has to put aside a special budget just for these repetitive, redundant, frivolous attempts by opposition members to drag somebody into the mud.

As a serious member of this committee, I am really taken aback that, once again, we are back discussing these points. It's very clear to me again, and I think that was a unanimous motion. If I'm correct, Mr. Anderson.... How many privilege motions...? Is that not the subject of one of the privilege motions that are before the House right now? I don't know. It seems like there's a lot of piling on in this regard. I would suggest that, for clarity and to keep things on the right path, maybe one thing at a time would be a good strategy. However, I digress.

Mr. Chair, it's clear to me that there are obligations and that we as MPs and as cabinet ministers have even more obligations. I'm happy to see the Ethics Commissioner really any time of the day or week to further explain that, because I remember, in my first round in this committee, that we were very cognizant that many members really didn't have a good understanding of their duties under the conflict of interest and ethics legislation.

People have been caught inadvertently. With regard to putting together your assets, liabilities, revenue sources, investments and so on, as somebody who's a former banker, I pride myself on being pretty good at that, but even so, it can happen that you forget something. You could have a separate account for a TFSA or something. I'm always very pleased when someone in the Office of the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner takes the time, gives us a call and explains what it is, so that we're able to correct it, because God forbid that something should be posted and not be correct. I'm one of those people. To be hauled in front of this committee to explain myself and so on.... I don't think any member of Parliament would enjoy that.

I think that we have to let the Ethics Commissioner do his work. He has, in this case, on three different occasions.... Am I right? I believe it is on three different occasions, in three different reports, that he has assured us that if there are any concerns, he would be, of course, the first one to be cognizant and seized with having to do what would need to be done in that case—further investigations, further interviews and so forth. Therefore, I don't really understand why the Conservatives are not willing to let the Ethics Commissioner do his work.

• (1640)

It would seem to me that there are better things we could be doing. There are more productive things we could be doing to be serving our constituents. I'm quite sure the other opposition members here would feel the same way.

Chair, I'm still putting my thoughts together on this. Please, put me back on the list. I'd like to come back after I've gathered my thoughts a bit.

Those were some preliminary observations that I wanted to make.

Thank you.

The Chair: I put the member for Châteauguay—Lacolle, Ms. Shanahan, back on the list.

I'm going to Mr. Cooper next.

Go ahead.

Ms. Iqra Khalid: Chair, could I be put on the list, please?

The Chair: Sure.

Mr. Michael Cooper: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Ms. Shanahan alleged that Conservatives are bringing forward frivolous ethics complaints. I would remind Ms. Shanahan, through you, Mr. Chair, of the litany of guilty findings by the Ethics Commissioner with respect to key figures in this government.

We have the Prime Minister, who was found guilty of violating the Conflict of Interest Act not once, but twice. He is the first prime minister in Canadian history to be found guilty of violating the Conflict of Interest Act.

How about the current Minister of Public Safety, Dominic LeBlanc? He was found guilty of contravening the Conflict of Interest Act.

Then there's the trade minister, Mary Ng. She was found guilty of violating the Conflict of Interest Act.

Do you remember Bill Morneau, the former finance minister under Justin Trudeau? He was found guilty of violating the Conflict of Interest Act. I think it was twice in his case.

Then there's the Prime Minister's former parliamentary secretary, who was found guilty of contravening the Conflict of Interest Act.

What we have is a pattern of conflict and corruption in this government that goes right to the top, right to the Prime Minister.

Mr. Michael Barrett: They are serial lawbreakers.

Mr. Michael Cooper: They are a bunch of serial lawbreakers. Indeed, the Prime Minister, their leader, is probably the biggest lawbreaker among them.

With respect to the motion that has been put forward by Mr. Barrett, the central question that must be answered is this: Who is Randy? Where is Randy, by the way? Where is he? He seems to be in hiding in the wake of today's report in the National Post, which said that he fraudulently represented that his company was indigenous owned to secure millions of dollars in a federal contract. Where is he? It would be nice if he could show his face.

There is an affidavit that was filed on November 5, which we now have a copy of. Contained within the affidavit is a series of exhibits that include new text messages that cast further doubt about the minister's truthfulness when he came before this committee. I think it's important to look at the track record of this minister when it comes to telling the truth and when it comes to being forthcoming.

This is a minister who came to this committee in June and was adamant that he wasn't the Randy in the text messages, but of course, the Ghaoui Group believed at all times that the Randy in the text messages was the Minister of Employment.

Stephen Anderson was asked by Global News, "Who is the Randy in the text messages?" He said, "Well, it's the VP of logistics." When Global News looked into who is the VP of logistics, they found that it was not a "Randy" but a guy by the name of Edward Anderson, who turns out to be Stephen Anderson's father, Stephen Anderson being the shady business partner of the Minister of Employment.

Global News made further inquiries to find a trace of this other Randy. They couldn't. Stephen Anderson came before the committee and said there was only one Randy that was ever connected to Global Health Imports, and that is the Minister of Employment. That's not to mention the fact that in the original text messages that were discovered, Randy is referenced in the context of being a partner.

It turns out that the Minister of Employment was a partner with Stephen Anderson up until he was elected in 2021. At the time of the text messages, the minister had a 50% ownership stake in the company, Global Health Imports.

● (1645)

In the face of all that, without any trace of another Randy, without any credible explanation of who this other Randy could be, there is really only one conclusion that can be drawn on the question of who Randy is, which is that Randy is the Minister of Employment, the minister from Edmonton, a Randy who shook down Global Health Imports in a half-million-dollar wire fraud scheme, a Randy who was a 50% owner, a partner in a company that has been ordered by Alberta courts to pay back clients \$7.8 million for ripping them off.

We have a minister now who is part of a company that has been sued by The Ghaoui Group for this half-million-dollar shakedown when Global Health Imports failed to deliver the PPE that had been ordered, pursuant to the contract that they had entered into.

When the minister came to committee in June, one of the things his office did at the time was issue a statement that it could not have been the minister, because the minister was in Vancouver on September 8, 2022, at a cabinet meeting, and didn't have access to his phone. Therefore, it was impossible that the Randy in the text messages was the minister. Then, after he appeared before the committee for the first time, Global News uncovered new text messages—

Mr. Michael Barrett: Uh-oh.

Mr. Michael Cooper: —from September 6, 2022, between Anderson and The Ghaoui Group, in which Anderson, as he's shaking them down for the half-million dollars, says, “asking as west coast is closing in seven minutes and Randy is in the Vancouver office.”

Oops! Randy is in Vancouver.

The minister, it turns out, was in Vancouver on September 6.

Mr. Matthew Green (Hamilton Centre, NDP): Aha!

Mr. Michael Cooper: When the minister came back to committee in September with these fresh text messages—fresh insofar as they had just recently been made public—my colleague, Mr. Barrett, put it to him that he was obviously that Randy.

The minister, confronted with the text messages, admitted that he was in Vancouver on September 6. Then he provided new information that he had withheld from the committee, which is that he had texted and spoken with Anderson on September 6.

When the minister came in June, he would have had committee believe that he had nothing to do with Anderson, that upon being elected in 2021, other than having a 50% ownership stake, which is a pretty big deal, he never spoke to this guy, that he had nothing to do with the operations of the company and that he was totally oblivious to what was going on.

Then he came back, and, confronted with text messages placing him in Vancouver at the same time that Anderson referred to a Randy in Vancouver, he suddenly said, “Oh, by the way, I spoke with Anderson.”

That constituted a material omission on the part of the minister. The minister, for all intents and purposes, by his omission, misrepresented to this committee his dealings with Anderson.

● (1650)

Mr. Michael Barrett: Exactly. Wow!

Mr. Michael Cooper: It's part of a pattern of not being forthcoming. It's part of a pattern of a minister who is changing his story as new details emerge.

Now that we have these additional text messages, evidence that the minister was not forthcoming, they may provide further evidence that the minister was involved in fraud. It will be interesting to see how his story changes when he, hopefully, comes before this committee as soon as possible.

We need to hear from this minister. He shouldn't be a minister. He should have been fired long ago as a minister. He has no place sitting in the cabinet, given his record of, frankly, not being forthcoming and being implicated in this shady business that is riddled by allegations of fraud. It's not just allegations of fraud. I'll emphasize again that there is \$7.8 million in judgments by Alberta courts against his company, the company that he had a 50% interest in, stemming from lawsuits from the time he was a partner in the business.

Mr. Chair, it's important that we pass Mr. Barrett's motion and haul Minister Boissonnault back to this committee.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Cooper.

Mr. Fisher, go ahead on the motion.

Mr. Darren Fisher (Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, Lib.): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

As I'm listening to the comments by Mr. Barrett and Mr. Cooper—I listened to the comments from Mr. Genuis, but those were on a different issue. Those were on the National Post story about the indigenous angle—I don't see anything. We've supported this motion in the past or a motion almost exactly like this.

We've had this looked at by the Ethics Commissioner every time that Mr. Barrett has asked for it to go to the Ethics Commissioner. I seem to recall that we asked him one time whether he looks into something when asked by a parliamentarian, and I think he said yes. Obviously, if this committee decides to ask again, he'll look in to it again, but I don't see anything in the motion that's new. I didn't hear anything in the debate that was new. It was more to get some clips talking about this and talking about that, but I didn't hear anything new in this.

We've seen all of that stuff. I feel we've seen it all. I don't see any sign of anything new while the minister was a minister. There's talk about things coming out when he wasn't a minister, between 2019 and 2021, but I don't see anything that's come up today that's brand spanking new in this motion, other than asking for some different people on the same topic, and one of those people on the list is already pegged to come to this committee.

I guess I'll continue to listen to the debate and continue to listen to the rationale for why we want to do this yet again. It reminds me of that awesome Bill Murray movie, *Groundhog Day*. I expect, if you bring the same people in for the same questions, you're going to get the same answers, but again, I'll listen to what other members of the committee have to say.

• (1655)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Fisher.

Mr. Housefather, go ahead, please.

Mr. Anthony Housefather (Mount Royal, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

My confusion stems from the fact that the motion asks us to call the head of The Ghaoui Group and different employees of Global Health Imports, who are the subject of a civil claim whereby The Ghaoui Group is suing the company for approximately \$500,000.

This committee is not a court. I have no basis to use words like those Mr. Cooper was using before, like “shakedown”, or to make assumptions about which side is right in a lawsuit that is being undertaken.

I think we were all displeased with and dismayed by the testimony of Mr. Anderson, who is one of the defendants in this lawsuit, which is why this committee unanimously voted to recommend to the House to hold him in contempt and bring him before the House.

To me, all of the issues that relate to Mr. Boissonnault, who has now testified twice before the committee on this issue, are ones that relate to Mr. Anderson and his text messages and telephone calls and claims he made. To me, we're not going to gain anything related to the ethical behaviour of Mr. Boissonnault by bringing him back to the committee for a third time, when he will no doubt make the same comments he made the first two times he was here.

We have testimony...or at least we have reporters who have interviewed Ms. Ghaoui, who said she never spoke or communicated directly with Mr. Boissonnault, so all she could possibly offer is hearsay testimony about her communications with Mr. Anderson.

I'm at a loss about the point of this motion when these are issues that we're still dealing with and relitigating, and have talked about ad nauseam at the committee.

The one thing I would be willing to entertain is bringing Mr. Anderson back to ask him the difficult questions, since he has yet to appear before the bar of the House, given the filibustering going on in the House on a different privilege motion.

However, as of now, I certainly don't see what value Ms. Ghaoui will bring when she has said she's never had any direct relationship or communication with Mr. Boissonnault. She has nothing that could allow the committee to conclude that he committed an ethical violation, because all that she would know is what somebody else told her. I don't think bringing Mr. Boissonnault back for a third time will yield anything new either.

We would need to hear from Mr. Anderson under oath, being required by the Speaker to answer what it is that caused him to repeatedly type Mr. Boissonnault's name in his text messages—I think we all do not believe it is credible that this was an autocorrect

issue—and what caused him to use Mr. Boissonnault's name. I can think of many reasons. Mr. Boissonnault himself speculated on the reasons he might have for using Mr. Boissonnault's name, but really, the only person it makes sense to hear from is Mr. Anderson, and I think the House should proceed to that privilege motion and bring him to the bar of the House as quickly as possible.

Mr. Chairman, I'll yield the floor now. Maybe I'll come back later.

Thank you.

The Chair: Okay. Thank you, Mr. Housefather.

I'm going to go to my friend from Châteauguay—Lacolle. I have family who live there.

Go ahead, Ms. Shanahan.

• (1700)

Mrs. Brenda Shanahan: Oh. Is that true?

The Chair: Yes. They're in Châteauguay.

Mrs. Brenda Shanahan: We'll have to chat off-line. That's wonderful.

I said I wanted to gather my thoughts on this, but I'll pick up on what Mr. Housefather was saying, because that's where I was going, too. Now, I am not a lawyer, nor do I play one on TV, but that's what I was thinking.

It's an old joke, but it's a good one.

Mr. Matthew Green: We use it all the time, but I do play one on TV.

Mrs. Brenda Shanahan: Thank you for that, Mr. Green.

This idea is that there's this piling up of different actions between committee testimony and reporting to the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner not just once, not twice, but three times. Not just once, not just twice, but three times, the commissioner came back with basically no findings that warrant further investigation. There is a privilege motion somewhere in the lineup. What could be delaying the House getting to that privilege motion? I don't know. Maybe somebody can help me out with that.

I think we voted on one subamendment. Who knows? I understand that every single member of Parliament on the Conservative side must speak to the.... Is it the subamendment now?

Mr. Darren Fisher: It's the sub of the subamendment.

Mrs. Brenda Shanahan: That's right.

It's so refreshing to see such passion in the House in the matter of debate.

If members are really serious about wanting to find out about this.... Maybe they don't want to find out what Mr. Anderson has to say under oath. That's another interesting question to explore. Maybe they have their doubts as to what Mr. Anderson will provide by way of evidence, or they don't want to hear what Mr. Anderson has to say under oath and they simply are trying to delay that privilege motion indefinitely.

I'm just speculating here, Mr. Chair.

I certainly have my doubts as to the sincerity of some of my colleagues. I hate to say that, because I'd like to believe that every member of Parliament is here to get to the truth of matters and to work on behalf of Canadians. It's just possible that in this case there are some partisan games going on. I hate to go there, but there you have it.

Mr. Matthew Green: We didn't even get to [*Inaudible—Editor*]

Mrs. Brenda Shanahan: Yes. Are you on the list, Mr. Green?

Mr. Matthew Green: We haven't even talked about the cocaine yet.

Mrs. Brenda Shanahan: Very good.

Let's have Mr. Green on the list, and we'll get to him very shortly.

Mr. Matthew Green: You guys remember, right?

You forgot the third person connected?

Mrs. Brenda Shanahan: Yes, we're in for some revelations, apparently.

The Chair: Can we keep the debate on topic, please?

Go ahead.

Mrs. Brenda Shanahan: I want to address something else.

You know, I have worked with Mr. Cooper on a number of different committees, and I can certainly appreciate his style. However, the whole "Guilty! Guilty!" thing is.... I don't know. It's effective as a social media clip, I suppose. That's not my thing.

The commissioner appeared before us and talked about what the act is intended to do. I believe the act came into force and was renewed a few times. What it intends to do is act as a guideline. Yes, there are some punitive aspects to it, as well there should be. However, this is not a court of law. It's to call members back into line when there are behaviours, actions, activities, omissions or something like that.

It's not even so much about the individuals themselves needing to be called back into line. Our concern is about Parliament as a whole, is it not? We want Canadians to have confidence in the workings of Parliament and in any serving member of Parliament. We certainly earn a well-above-average salary. I think we can all agree that we earn a healthy salary. It's public, as well it should be. Our expenses are duly advertised and made public.

This was before my time as a parliamentarian, but I seem to remember that there was quite a scandal around expenses. There was a senator who lived in Ottawa but was claiming a shack in P.E.I. or something. I don't know. Maybe someone here remembers the name. Was it a former journalist?

• (1705)

Ms. Iqra Khalid: What was his name? Was it Duffy? That's right.

Mrs. Brenda Shanahan: That's right. It was Mike Duffy. I used to enjoy his programs.

When you hear that somebody who should know better is reporting on the behaviour of parliamentarians but is himself double-billing the Canadian taxpayers.... I believe he was a senator from P.E.I., yet his home here in Ottawa was his principal residence. He was pretending to live in P.E.I. That's the kind of thing that leaves a bad taste in people's mouths. Then the chief of staff or someone wrote a cheque to cover his expenses, as if to make the whole thing go away.

Do you remember that?

Ms. Iqra Khalid: I remember that.

Mrs. Brenda Shanahan: Yes, I remember being impressed that he actually had a chequebook. So few people have a chequebook. I don't know whether you can do an e-transfer these days for the tens of thousands of dollars that the cheque was apparently for. I think it was \$90,000, or something.

Mr. Shuvaloy Majumdar: That was 12 years ago.

A voice: Didn't somebody go to jail?

Mrs. Brenda Shanahan: Yes, it's really quite something. Did somebody go to jail for that as well? Listen, I'll let another member talk about that, because I can't remember everything. I was doing other things at the time.

Our mandate is to be the committee that oversees those four critical independent commissioner roles, which, again, form the basis for us having confidence in our parliamentary system. As we saw the other day, the Commissioner of Lobbying makes sure that people registered as lobbyists are not at the same time acting as political advisers and vice versa. I won't go over that. I'm sure that's all on record from the last meeting. There's also the Privacy Commissioner, the Information Commissioner and, of course, the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner.

[*Translation*]

At the same time, Mr. Chair, you've reminded me that my fellow citizens are very interested in the work we do here. So I'd like to emphasize that this role of Commissioner is an interesting one. If I'm not mistaken, any member of the public or any member of Parliament can write to him with a complaint about something that has been observed. The Commissioner will then conduct an independent, fully confidential investigation.

We also don't want frivolous complaints or complaints sent out willy-nilly by opponents who just want to attack a colleague because he or she is a member of another political party. This is not at all the purpose of the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner. Rather, his role is to give instructions to MPs. I think every member here is very concerned, in December or January, when they receive a certain email. It's an email we don't want to miss because, if we miss the deadline, we'll get a call, won't we? We'll be told that our financial report is overdue.

It's safe to say they're pretty meticulous about how this information is reported. What's more, I imagine that there are journalists, MPs, researchers, employees and members of the public who will take a very close look at this. For example, if they see that a member of parliament has shares in a particular company, they'll wonder whether the company has any contracts with the government. I think this gives work to quite a few employees on the Hill. But that's the system we have to have in order to make sure people follow the rules.

● (1710)

When the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner finds compromising information, he issues his findings in a report, and obviously, a fine may apply. I think the fine goes up to about \$200. At the same time, the Commissioner will clarify exactly what happened, whether or not someone violated a regulation, and it's up to the member to correct his or her behaviour.

We're not talking about a sham tribunal, where a jail sentence is applied, or anything like that. It's just that I think my colleague is overreacting when he talks about guilt in a case which, frankly.... Don't you think I'm right?

As I said earlier, it can happen to anyone to forget an account, such as a tax-free savings account, a TFSA, for example, and for this information to become public.

In this case, I imagine the Commissioner could have refused subsequent complaints after the first complaint was filed, after the first investigation or the first time he concluded that Mr. Boissonnault had not violated any regulations. The Commissioner has other things to do. I imagine his time is limited. He's got a lot of work to do.

That's not how it happened. I think this just goes to show how conscientious the Commissioner is. He agreed to a second investigation, after which he produced a report saying that he had found nothing. Even the third time a complaint was filed, he said he'd found nothing.

He still testified about it, here, before this committee. On this side of the room, we're in complete agreement that when an incident raises questions, or we have the slightest doubt that the Commissioner isn't playing his role, we're going to question him about it.

I think that's what happened when Mr. Barrett made his first motion, when the Commissioner was conducting his investigation. It seems that it wasn't quick enough for Mr. Barrett's liking. Maybe that's not the right expression, but I think Mr. Barrett wanted to have his cake and eat it too. He wanted both jobs. In my opinion,

our role is enough for us and we should let others do what they have to do.

In addition, we heard testimony from Minister Boissonnault, who appeared before our committee, and I believe it was in June that we heard the Commissioner's first testimony. I wasn't at that meeting, but I think it's a sign of transparency to invite an officer of Parliament of this calibre to come and answer our questions very clearly.

In fact, the Commissioner made it very clear that the minister in question complied fully with the regulations of the Conflict of Interest Act and the Conflict of Interest Code for Members of Parliament.

● (1715)

The minister met all the requirements of the Conflict of Interest Code for Members of Parliament with respect to the companies that were the subject of Mr. Barrett's complaint and motion. There was no need for the committee to conduct a study.

We should be careful about duplicating committee work and not prejudice what the Commissioner will find. I see that other committees are trying to do the work of an officer of Parliament. It's a bit peculiar. The risk is that a committee will put obstacles in the way of the Commissioner in question. I don't think that's anyone's objective here.

I'm thinking of all the work done by the Auditor General or the Parliamentary Budget Officer. These are individuals and professionals who are very capable of carrying out the tasks entrusted to them. Parliamentarians, with all their privileges, can interfere with the work of these professionals. But I don't think that's the objective of anyone here.

The Conservatives were certainly not satisfied. In particular, Mr. Barrett was back at it again. Text messages were mentioned. Once again, we can ask the Commissioner to examine these text messages. I think all the members of the committee showed good faith. The minister proactively sent all his cellphone records and messages sent during the period in question. We received these same documents at the committee.

We saw clearly that Minister Boissonnault had not received any WhatsApp calls or text messages from Mr. Steven Anderson, who had a connection with the GHI company.

Certainly this was not Mr. Barrett's goal, but the Conservatives wanted to continue the attack anyway. They didn't want to let the facts compromise their story. When the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner reviewed all these documents, he said he found no evidence that the minister was involved.

• (1720)

In another committee—indeed, apparently it's not enough to monopolize the time of a single committee—the Commissioner made it very clear that Mr. Boissonnault had offered to give him all the information concerning his communications on September 8, i.e., his exchanges, telephone conversations, emails, etc. He said that he and his team had looked at everything that had been offered and that it was clear that there had been no contact between the minister and Mr. Anderson. I think that's pretty clear. I don't know if we want the Commissioner to testify at every meeting, but that's pretty much the case. Apparently, he has to be told the same thing over and over again.

Then Mr. Barrett continued. He asked the Commissioner if there had been any other messages or text messages. The Commissioner replied that he had asked the minister if he had any further information and that, should he receive anything else, he would be able to determine whether Mr. Anderson—and it is Mr. Anderson who should be targeted in this case—had used Minister Boissonnault's name in vain or whether there had actually been any conversations. Apparently, in a third committee, the Commissioner confirmed that there was no investigation concerning the minister. So they want to keep repeating the same story, no matter what the Commissioner said.

If anyone here ever wanted to question the competence, professionalism and quality of the Commissioner's work, I think I'd have a problem with that. I'm not saying that's the case, but I think it would be really unacceptable. We have a supervisory role here at the committee. We can call to account officers of Parliament who have a link with the committee.

However, Mr. Cooper, don't tell me that you were the one who, at one point, in another committee, yelled at the Commissioner asking why he wasn't investigating. Please tell me it wasn't you who did that. Frankly, that would be beneath you. I know you have qualities and I don't think you're the kind of MP to attack an officer of Parliament, independent of government, in the performance of his or her duties.

Mr. Chair, I think I'll stop here. I hope that my fellow citizens now understand my position and the reason for our work here.

• (1725)

I know they found the report from our study on misinformation and disinformation very interesting. It's something people are concerned about. They love Facebook and being connected with friends, family and all that, but they're much more aware now of the risks of relying too much on social media.

This is work that has been done by the members of this committee and I salute everyone who worked on this study.

I heard behind the scenes that Mr. Villemure might have an interesting motion for us and I'd love to have the opportunity to look at it, but we surely can't waste our time with repetitive motions like the one Mr. Barrett has tabled here today.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Thank you, Mrs. Shanahan.

[English]

Mr. Matthew Green: I guess we won't hear about the cocaine.

[Translation]

The Chair: The next speaker is Ms. Khalid. She will be followed by Mr. Green, Mr. Housefather and Mr. Bains.

[English]

Ms. Iqra Khalid: Am I not on the list at all?

An hon. member: You're next.

Ms. Iqra Khalid: Oh, I'm next. Okay, sorry. Well, I should have—

The Chair: I said that.

Ms. Iqra Khalid: —paid more attention to you there, Chair. I appreciate that.

Mr. René Villemure: Life wouldn't be the same.

Ms. Iqra Khalid: Life would be a lot better if we all understood what our challenges are and how we could work together to resolve a lot of them.

Chair, today I wanted to.... It was a bit of a surprise in committee business. There was an issue I really wanted to discuss with our committee members to see if there was something we could do in our committee to try to resolve it.

Mr. Cooper sat with me on the justice committee many years ago when we went across the country on the issue of human trafficking and put forward some really strong recommendations. Some of those recommendations involved hotels and the hospitality sector and what their role and their accountability were in dealing with issues of human trafficking. The Hotel Association of Canada was on the Hill, meeting with MPs, and this was an issue we had brought up during our cross-country tour.

I was really hoping we could find a way to make sure that in the case of hotels, Airbnbs and other short-term stay places, not only should we know how they track their data....

Obviously, when you check into a hotel or short-term stay place, you need to provide your government-issued ID. You need to provide your credit card information. I was really hoping we could see how the privacy of Canadians is maintained there, but then also see how these short-term stay places, including hotels, Airbnbs and motels, can and do work with law enforcement to ensure that cases of human trafficking are proactively monitored—

• (1730)

Mr. Matthew Green: I have a point of order.

Ms. Iqra Khalid: I'm getting to my point.

Mr. Matthew Green: I still get to do my point of order. I'm going to speak once today.

Ms. Iqra Khalid: Please go ahead.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Darren Fisher): Go ahead on your point of order, Mr. Green.

Mr. Matthew Green: This is completely irrelevant to the task at hand.

Thank you.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Darren Fisher): I agree, although the chair let Mr. Genuis go on ad nauseam about things that had nothing to do with this motion as well. I'll give her a little bit of latitude, but not very much.

Ms. Iqra Khalid: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

You look good in that chair, Mr. Fisher.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

● (1735)

It won't be for a very long time: You're fine.

I appreciate the reminder by the NDP member.

My point in raising all of this is that is what I had hoped to discuss in committee business today, as opposed to something that has been hashed and rehashed again and again by the Ethics Commissioner, by this committee, by that committee, by the House of Commons, with no end in sight.... What I'm trying to say is that the Ethics Commissioner—three times—indicated that this matter is closed, that he has nothing to see, that there is nothing to investigate here, that he has conducted his investigation and has found nothing at the end of the day on the minister's part.

I'll also say, Mr. Chair, that it's been nine years for me as a member of Parliament. I go to hundreds of events. In fact, over this past year, I think I've attended over a thousand events within my community. I take photos with hundreds and thousands of people on a regular basis, who post these photos out of love, out of respect. I post their photos with me out of love and respect as well, but the perception of a close tie is not always a close tie in reality.

I think the work of the Ethics Commissioner has been really strong on this issue, because he has been asked time and time again to look into this issue. There have been multiple times when the minister himself has been questioned about this, yet we're still exactly where we were in the beginning, where the Ethics Commissioner still says that there's no investigation to be had here and where the minister has been very firm and has stayed consistent in what he's had to say, and yet we are yet again using important committee resources to rehash an issue.

In the motion here specifically, the member, Mr. Barrett, has listed Ms. Ghaoui as one of the witnesses, when we know that she has already agreed and has expressed an interest in appearing at this committee. I'm not sure why she is on the witness list. It makes no sense to me when somebody has said, "I'm coming. I want to come. Invite me. Let's go", and yet here we are, trying to create this perception that people are not being collaborative.

Mr. Majumdar, if you want to laugh, that's absolutely fine, but just go to a corner, please, so I'm not distracted, if that's okay.

Minister Boissonnault has appeared twice—

Some hon. members: [*Inaudible—Editor*]

Ms. Iqra Khalid: Chair....

The Chair: I'm telling them to be quiet. I just pointed at him.

Ms. Iqra Khalid: Thank you, Chair. I really appreciate your co-operation here.

Minister Boissonnault has appeared twice in this committee. He has answered quite disrespectful questions from the opposition parties and has done so openly. I'm not sure what more the opposition members want to hear from him.

Then the organization that's listed—I'm sorry; I don't have the motion in front of me—and the two witnesses from that organization had nothing to do with Minister Boissonnault. I'm not sure why they're listed.

In the past week I put forward a motion for this committee to contemplate how food services and delivery services are using Canadians' data and using surcharges. Today I wanted to present a motion on how we can protect Canadians through the hotel sector from human trafficking. I have all of these issues that my constituents are talking to me about, yet I get to sit here and talk about something that has been hashed out three times by the Ethics Commissioner. He said, every single time, that there's nothing to investigate here, yet here we are being a kangaroo court. Why? To me it makes no sense at all, when there are so many important issues for our committee to look into, for us to investigate—if that's the right word—and for us to review and provide relevant recommendations on to the government.

Chair, I don't even know when the last time was that we tabled a report from this committee. We have a lot of work to do, and for us to sit here and....

The Chair: Go ahead, Ms. Khalid. You have the floor.

Ms. Iqra Khalid: Thank you. I appreciate that, Chair.

For us to sit here and contemplate how we are going to get somebody in a "gotcha" moment when the Ethics Commissioner himself has said that there is no gotcha moment.... I'm not sure why we are wasting the very important resources of the House. I'm not sure why we are wasting the time of the 50 people that are here in this room discussing this when we could be discussing some really significant issues that actually impact Canadians.

It's one thing to say that we need to look into this, that we need to make sure that everything was done by the book, that everything is right and that we have the right people coming before this committee to reassure Canadians that the issue is taken care of. It's another issue entirely to be badgering.

Three times the Ethics Commissioner said that there is no investigation here. There's nothing to investigate. Three times he said that, yet the Conservatives find it to be their hobby and their top priority to continually badger and harass the Ethics Commissioner into going at this issue again and again. They leverage the important resources of this committee to do that when there are so many important issues for us to be diving into. There are so many important issues for us to review, to provide recommendations on, to hear from witnesses on and to hear from experts on, yet we sit here so the Conservatives can get clips, so they can raise money off of their little fundraising pages with the little social media clickbait that they love to project.

It's unfortunate, Chair. I really wish that the party opposite, with their allies, the Bloc and the NDP, had given more consideration to government resources and to ensuring that we are doing right by this committee's mandate and ensuring that we are actually trying to help Canadians at the end of the day.

Chair, I came into this meeting with some good faith that I would be able to move forward on a motion to look into how data collection by the hotel industry and their collaboration with law enforcement can help human trafficking victims. What I've done here instead is sit and rehash something that has been completely figured out by the Ethics Commissioner three times over.

I am absolutely baffled as to how and why we got to this point. I think we can do better, Chair. I really think that we can do better. I think that we can put this matter aside and move on to matters that actually help Canadians and that help young women who are being trafficked every day in my riding, for example, and all across Canada.

At this point, though, I'd like to move an amendment to this motion. Ms. Ghaoui has already expressed an interest in appearing at this committee, so there's no reason for her to be included on the witness list that Mr. Barrett has presented.

I seek to amend the motion by removing Ms. Ghaoui's name from the motion. She is going to come before us anyway. It doesn't make sense for us to be redundant.

I'll park my comments there, Chair. I'd like to be added to the bottom of your speaking list again.

Thank you.

• (1740)

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Khalid.

There is an amendment on the floor to remove Ms. Ghaoui from the list.

Go ahead on the amendment, Mr. Green.

Mr. Matthew Green: Thank you.

The Chair: Yes, go ahead.

Mr. Matthew Green: I do appreciate opening up discussion around witnesses.

I talked about this sordid tale. In my estimation, this is a made-for-TV movie, or I guess now a Netflix series, perhaps, given the twists and turns.

I remember the revelations of Mr. Anderson. Much to the chagrin of the Conservatives, who filibustered as though we're part of some cover-up, they will recall, as will the Hansard, that it was in fact my line of questioning that finally got him to admit that indeed there was no other Randy. I recall at that meeting being dumbfounded that there were so many sordid twists and turns out of his testimony, and the one thing that never came to light was this other connection to a massive cocaine smuggling operation.

I reference a Global News article so that people watching don't get confused about my earlier references to this. This is so twisted that we never actually got to this part, which is wild. Back in July 16, 2024, the headline reads "Boissonnault's former business partner linked to woman detained in Dominican Republic cocaine bust":

Liberal Cabinet Minister Randy Boissonnault's former partner in a medical supply company has ties to an Edmonton woman who was detained in a massive cocaine bust in the Dominican Republic in April 2022.

Federal incorporation documents show that Stephen Anderson, chief operating officer of Global Health Imports (GHI), created a numbered company with Francheska Leblond in December 2021—

If you're looking at timelines, this would also align with the time in which Mr. Boissonnault had business dealings with Mr. Anderson, so we're at least at one degree of separation, or maybe less as the story evolves. This was four months before she was actually detained in a Caribbean country.

Boissonnault and Anderson co-owned GHI until mid-June, and he did claim that he had dropped the shares. What happened in that case was international in headlines. This was, for a moment, an international story, but what was never connected to this particular study was this person's possible connection:

Dominican authorities detained 12 Canadians, including Leblond, after a crew from the Canadian charter company Pivot Airlines said they discovered 210 kilograms of cocaine hidden in their plane.

I'm not talking small amounts here. That would make Escobar blush.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Matthew Green: Yet here we are with this degree....

Now, I should note that she was released, but she also was previously under RCMP investigation and has a history of drug charges under a previous name, Francheska Quach.

She wasn't charged and she was released by the RCMP, but that's just to give a bit of an example of the types of circles that Mr. Anderson was in a direct business relationship with, in one degree of separation.

There are lots of questions that we have about whether they had an office or whether they didn't have an office, and so on and so forth—

• (1745)

Mrs. Brenda Shanahan: I have a point of order.

Finish your thought, but I do have a point of order to bring forward.

Mr. Matthew Green: No, feel free to make the point of order.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Matthew Green: I have many thoughts.

The Chair: Is it a point of order on the amount of cocaine, or...?

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Chair: What's the point of order on?

Mrs. Brenda Shanahan: It's just on—

Mr. Matthew Green: Is it on relevance?

Mrs. Brenda Shanahan: It's just that it does say in the article that Randy Boissonnault has not met—

Mr. Matthew Green: That's debate. That's not a point of order.

The Chair: That is debate.

Mrs. Brenda Shanahan: Can we have this article? Can we be provided with it?

The Chair: Yes, it's in the public realm, so you can search for it.

Mr. Matthew Green: Mr. Chair, I would encourage members—

The Chair: Go ahead.

Mr. Matthew Green: I would have understood the honourable member, who's very learned, had they had said it was relevance, and I would have responded to a point of order on relevance.

In this amendment, we're looking to remove people. I believe that there could be the potential to expand the list of people, because I am curious about this.

If I had Mr. Boissonnault here, I would ask him directly if Francheska Leblond—or Francheska Quach, or whatever alias she's used—in any way, shape or form, had any connection whatsoever with GHI. I would want to know that. In fact, I would be interested—because maybe I couldn't take Mr. Boissonnault's word for it—in what she would have to say for this, so if we're in this process now of removing people or adding people, just know that there could be the possibility of subamendments.

Again, Mr. Chair, looking at all this stuff, the fact that this was part of the story back in July but didn't actually get dealt with in this committee just shows how twisted this whole affair is. I won't move a subamendment to the amendment, but I will say I have questions about Francheska Leblond's business relationship with Mr. Anderson and whether or not there was any connection directly or indirectly with Mr. Boissonnault.

This is because when we're talking about integrity and ethics, I think business dealings with people who are under investigation, although not charged, for smuggling massive amounts of cocaine... I'm not a conspiracy theorist. I am from Hamilton Centre. I would say if your other business is in imports and exports and your business partner is attached to somebody connected to smuggling, there are lots of questions still to be asked.

Those are my remarks. Thank you.

• (1750)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Green.

I see Mr. Housefather's and Mr. Bains' hands up. I have you on the main motion. I don't have you on the amendment. Is that correct?

It is. Okay.

The other thing I want to let committee members know is that I have asked the clerk to get us as much time as we need to deal with this issue.

Ms. Khalid, please go ahead.

Ms. Iqra Khalid: Thanks, Mr. Chair. I just want to clarify.

From my understanding, you put it to the committee that Ms. Ghaoui wanted to come and that you would invite her, and I believe that nobody in this committee disagreed. That's the only reason that I'm asking for that name to be removed from the motion; it's because my understanding is that she has been invited to come and that you are working on scheduling it in already, so it doesn't make sense for us to be redundant in the motion before us today.

The Chair: The motion indicates that Ms. Ghaoui is to appear. We have agreed as a committee that she's to appear. If redundancy is the issue, then I'll leave it to the committee, but you did move an amendment, so we're going to deal with the amendment. If it's the will of committee to remove her from that list, then we'll proceed on that basis.

I don't see—

Ms. Iqra Khalid: Mr. Chair, I just want to clarify that removing her from the list does not mean that we are not inviting her to this committee.

The Chair: Yes, that is 100% correct.

Ms. Iqra Khalid: My understanding is that she has already been invited—

The Chair: She has.

Ms. Iqra Khalid: —and that you are working on scheduling her in. That is why I'm asking for her to be removed from the motion.

The Chair: We have reached out and we've been given an indication of her willingness to appear before the committee. There have been some circumstances that have prevented her from coming before the committee up to this point. Right now, the indication that we have is roughly around December 16, I believe.

Madam Clerk, isn't it around that time? Okay.

I have to deal with what I have in front of me, and that is the motion and the amendment to remove her. I don't have any other discussion on this issue on the amendment, so do I have consensus on the amendment?

Some hon. members: No.

The Chair: Okay, then I'm going to call the roll on the amendment and we'll go from there.

Ms. Iqra Khalid: She's already coming, guys.

The Chair: Well, I have to deal with what I have in front of me, Ms. Khalid, and that's what I'm trying to do here.

Ms. Iqra Khalid: It's just politics.

The Chair: It's not politics.

Ms. Iqra Khalid: I'm sorry. That wasn't for you, Mr. Chair. I wasn't saying that about you.

The Chair: It's motion, amendment, vote. That's the way it works around here.

Go ahead, Madam Clerk.

The Clerk of the Committee (Ms. Nancy Vohl): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The vote is on the amendment by Ms. Khalid.

We have five yeas and five nays.

The Chair: I will vote against it.

(Amendment negatived: nays 6; yeas 5)

The Chair: I am going to go back to the main motion.

Mr. Green, you are next on the list on the main motion.

Mr. Matthew Green: Oh, I've said my piece.

The Chair: Okay. You did that during the amendment.

Now I'm going to go to Mr. Housefather.

Mr. Housefather, your hand is not up. Is that—

Mr. Anthony Housefather: It was up, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Are you ready to go? You're next on the list. Go ahead, please.

Mr. Anthony Housefather: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

[*Translation*]

I want to come back to the reason for bringing Minister Boissonnault before the committee for a third time. I understand very well that the question before the committee is to establish whether Mr. Boissonnault was linked to the company after the date on which he became minister.

Mr. Boissonnault has appeared before the committee twice, and he has twice denied that he was connected with the company after that date. The real question is why Mr. Anderson repeatedly used Mr. Boissonnault's name in text messages and perhaps in conversations with people who were potential customers or suppliers of the company. For this purpose, we need Mr. Anderson.

The first time Mr. Anderson appeared before the committee, he was clearly a terrible witness. For this reason, and because of Mr. Anderson's failure to provide the information requested by the committee, the members of the committee unanimously asked the House to raise a question of privilege and bring Mr. Anderson be-

fore the House of Commons to answer our questions before the Speaker and all Canadians.

In my opinion, this must be the next step. It seems to me completely pointless to call witnesses who have had no direct communication with Mr. Boissonnault, and it's pointless to call Mr. Boissonnault a third time without new information.

Here's what we should do. The House of Commons should refer the present question of privilege to the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs. This is what was proposed by the Speaker, this is what is the subject of the motion before the House, and this is what is currently being filibustered by the Conservative Party. Once we've dealt with this motion of privilege, we'll turn to Mr. Anderson's question of privilege. We can all, unanimously and very quickly, pass this motion and bring Mr. Anderson before the House to get real answers.

If, after Mr. Anderson's testimony before the House of Commons, we have new information and intelligence that helps us understand why Mr. Anderson used Mr. Boissonnault's name in his text messages and conversations, it may be useful to call Mr. Boissonnault or other witnesses to testify again before the committee. However, it seems to me completely pointless to deal with this matter before we have called Mr. Anderson before the House of Commons.

For these reasons, I will vote against the motion.

• (1755)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Housefather.

Mr. Bains, you now have the floor.

[*English*]

Mr. Parm Bains (Steveston—Richmond East, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

A lot has been discussed here, and I'm going to try to add some comments. We've gone in a lot of different directions.

It's clear that Mr. Anderson's actions during his appearance here were unacceptable. He has clearly misled the committee in a number of different ways. He's using Minister Boissonnault's name to leverage his interests in some capacity in a number of different ways.

I agree with Mr. Housefather that this matter can be dealt with in the House, as we've all agreed to, as long as the Conservative Party can drop the filibuster that's been going on there for a number of weeks. Ultimately, that's not up to me, but if this matter is to be studied at a committee....

This goes back to Mr. Barrett's original motion. It's to do with an application to the indigenous procurement program. I am a member of OGGO and Mr. Barrett is also a member, and we have an indigenous study taking place there currently. It's under way. It has been a robust study, and the committee has been proceeding collaboratively in the study to look at the procurement strategy for indigenous businesses, which was first established in 1996.

We've had a number of different witnesses come in: First Nations Finance Authority; First Nations Financial Management Board; PLATO, which does software testing; National Aboriginal Capital Corporations Association; Assembly of First Nations; and Canadian Council for Indigenous Business. We've discussed how the government could find indigenous businesses on lists; who should best manage these lists; who should be applying for, or warranted to be, an indigenous business; and who should be qualified for, or accredited to apply as, an indigenous business.

I think it could be helpful if this study, specifically in relation to Mr. Anderson and what led him to apply, could get to the bottom of why he would consider this. What are the different questions we could ask?

At the same time, we could talk about how, under the program, federal organizations may set aside procurement for indigenous business under the PSIB, but in some cases the set-asides are mandatory or the set-asides give indigenous business a right of first refusal or exclusive bidding rights on federal contracting opportunities. What led Mr. Anderson to think that he could apply?

In August 2021, the Government of Canada recommitted to renewing and strengthening the economic relationship with indigenous entrepreneurs and communities by providing increased economic opportunities for first nations, Inuit and Métis businesses through the federal procurement process.

Initial reports show that government departments are now actually exceeding the 5% target, and that's not a maximum by any means. It was a minimum target that was set, and this of course continues to allow for more opportunities to work with indigenous businesses and to continue to try to improve. As we talk with first nations, Inuit and Métis partners, including business leaders and financial institutions, to figure out what's working or not working and how to do it better, we need to root out these types of false applications.

Going back to Mr. Anderson and his use of a minister's name for leverage, it's clear that is what he was doing in a lot of these messages. Perhaps he was even trying to intimidate whoever he was working with by saying that he has this minister onside. It's probably not the first time people have done that.

• (1800)

I know I'm a new member, but there are all kinds of lobbyist activities and all kinds of networking. You have people saying, "Oh, yeah, I'm buddies with Pierre Poilievre" or another member of this House, trying to leverage their position while negotiating something. That's not far-fetched. I think something like that is happening. Look at other engagement opportunities and partners. I think Mrs. Shanahan showed us an example of this earlier today. We've seen certain businesses ultimately called in and whatever contracts

they had revoked, or even whatever status they were trying to use to obtain some of these contracts being revoked.

On Mr. Barrett's original motion, I know members in the mighty OGGO might not be too happy if we look at the study going on over there. Maybe it's a possibility. Something like this could go in that direction, in order to see what led Mr. Anderson to apply for something he may not be qualified for. I want to see whether there's some opportunity to co-operate and get to a different way forward and move this discussion forward.

I'll leave my thoughts there. I may come back.

Thank you.

• (1805)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Bains.

Mrs. Shanahan, go ahead, please.

Mrs. Brenda Shanahan: Thank you, Chair.

Mr. Green brought up quite a salacious story. I want to bring up something. That article—I believe it's the same Global News article—clearly states that Global News found no direct tie between Boissonnault and LeBlanc.

The member mentioned another name—Arseneault—but maybe that was misspoken.

Mr. Matthew Green: I think it was a mishearing.

Mrs. Brenda Shanahan: I thought I heard "Arseneault". You were really rhyming the names off there.

Anyway, Mr. Boissonnault came out with a statement that he had no knowledge of this person, and so on and so forth.

Mr. Green's point about the relevance of this is well taken. It's not relevant. I don't think we're here to start accusing people simply by association. If that is the case, anybody who had a friend in school, or whatever....

Chair, I'm going to leave it there. If anybody wants to see the article, I found it by looking up "Anderson" and "cocaine".

The Chair: I believe I have Ms. Khalid next, followed by Mr. Green.

Ms. Iqra Khalid: Chair, I'll relinquish my time to Mr. Green. I always love to hear what he has to say.

The Chair: Mr. Green, go ahead.

Mr. Matthew Green: Thank you.

In the same story, the editor's note referenced by Mrs. Shanahan says that Global News has not independently verified this claim.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Green.

I have nobody else on the list.

We're on the motion proposed by Mr. Barrett.

Do we have unanimous consent?

Ms. Iqra Khalid: Can I have the floor after the vote?

I think it's probably going to be a recorded vote. Is that right?

The Chair: This will be a recorded vote, but I have Mr. Ville-
mure.

I will call the vote.

Madam Clerk, go ahead.

The Clerk: There are five yeas and five nays.

The Chair: I will vote yes.

(Motion agreed to: yeas 6; nays 5)

The Chair: Go ahead, Ms. Khalid.

Ms. Iqra Khalid: Thank you very much, Chair.

I had intended to move a motion today, but I will leave that for another day.

What I would really like to see from you, Chair, is our work plan for the rest of the year. I'm not sure if you could outline today what we're expecting or anticipating up to the end of the year and into the new year.

Perhaps you could send us a digital copy of the working calendar that you're working on with the clerk. That would be really helpful for all of us in this committee so that we'd be able to gauge and schedule accordingly.

• (1810)

The Chair: I appreciate that.

We did schedule some committee and subcommittee meetings to work out a schedule, but you'll recall that back in April or May, we had situations that kept us from getting much done in the way of committee business.

I can certainly share with the committee, as I did at the top of the meeting, what the game plan is for the week of the 19th and who we have coming in.

We're still waiting to hear from the minister on the CRA study. The study on disinformation and misinformation is something that the analysts are working on. Maybe I can get a better sense from Maxime or Alexandra on where we are on the disinformation and misinformation study in terms of timelines. We've had some conversations about that as well.

Not to put you on the spot, but perhaps you could share with the committee some of that information.

Mr. Maxime-Olivier Thibodeau (Committee Researcher): Sure. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

It's being drafted right now, as fast as we can. The schedule dates are to be distributed to the committee members on December 11.

The Chair: Okay. We will have to schedule some meetings before the House rises for the winter break to ensure that we deal with that report. As you can imagine, it's going to be a fairly lengthy report. We had quite a few witnesses over several meetings.

That's the work plan. We have, as I said, the CRA motion, and now there's the adoption of this motion. That should take us the next two or three weeks at least, but we'll—

Ms. Iqra Khalid: Is it this motion specifically, Chair? Is this motion going to...?

The Chair: No, there are two motions that we're dealing with. There is the CRA motion and then this motion that was passed today.

Ms. Iqra Khalid: Yes.

The Chair: I will work with the clerk to get a work plan out to committee members, hopefully by early next week. When we come back on the 19th and on the 21st, we will be dealing with the CRA issue.

Go ahead, Mr. Villemure.

[*Translation*]

Mr. René Villemure: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I would like to give notice to my colleagues that we intend to present a motion in connection with the study on social media that we have just completed. I won't be presenting it today.

At the time, we delayed tabling our report, because the Royal Canadian Mounted Police and the Canadian Security Intelligence Service were conducting investigations. We were supposed to receive answers in September, but never did. Last week, on October 31, we adopted the report, and I don't think my colleagues will want to go back on that.

I believe that the factor that led to the minister's decision to close TikTok's offices in Canada is not something innocent. I think we absolutely have to take note of this decision, as it directly affects the protection of personal data and privacy.

As TikTok will be leaving Canada, I'm not saying that the commissioner will no longer be able to conduct an investigation, but it will be difficult for justice to be done in the case of this entity, as it will no longer be on his territory. In terms of privacy, this is a major implication. We didn't have this information last week, and I think we need to look into it.

Yesterday evening, I was stunned by the news of the closure of these offices. Beyond the national security consideration, which stands out for me, the fact remains that we won't have the opportunity to conduct a review on the matter, so we won't have the full picture. I believe we will have no choice but to take this into consideration.

So I'll table a motion, but I'll do it at the next meeting, since we're a little short of time today.

The Chair: Mr. Villemure, if that's what you want to do, I suggest you file your notice of motion with the clerk 48 hours before the meeting. That would be the best way to proceed.

• (1815)

Mr. René Villemure: Okay.

[*English*]

The Chair: Ms. Khalid, go ahead.

Ms. Iqra Khalid: Thank you, Chair.

First, on Mr. Villemure's highlighting of this issue, am I correct that you haven't tabled the report yet?

The Chair: No, I have not—

Ms. Iqra Khalid: Maybe we can just add an addendum or a paragraph in that report and just not have to—

The Chair: It's a little more complicated than that, given that we have already adopted the report. I have—

Ms. Iqra Khalid: If there's unanimous consent in this committee, I'm sure we can add a paragraph to it.

[*Translation*]

The Chair: All right, but I think the motion Mr. Villemure is going to table is for another study.

As for the decision, I don't want to speak for Mr. Villemure, but that's another topic.

[*English*]

Ms. Iqra Khalid: Okay. That's fair.

The Chair: I think that's what Mr. Villemure was talking about.

Ms. Iqra Khalid: Okay. I get it. I agree 100% and I appreciate it.

Thank you, Mr. Villemure.

The second point, Chair, is about my Uber study, my delivery services study. I'm wondering if we're going to get to it this year.

The Chair: Hang on a sec, okay?

Mr. René Villemure: It's scheduled for 2026.

Ms. Iqra Khalid: It's in 2026?

Mr. René Villemure: January....

The Chair: In that timeline, we'll work it out and we'll make sure we get the Uber study, yes.

Ms. Iqra Khalid: Thanks, Chair. I'm really passionate about it.

The Chair: I know that the CRA study was a priority for the committee as well.

Ms. Iqra Khalid: I'm fine with that too, but I really want the Uber study to at least get started.

The Chair: All right. We'll work on that with the clerk. We'll have that out early next week.

I have no other business.

Thank you, everyone. The meeting is adjourned.

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